
CAPITOL CONNECTION

A Weekly Update of News and Views
For Opinion Shapers and Policy Makers

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



October 5, 2007

Congressman Miller Protects Right to Religious Expression

Congressman Miller this week joined 137 of his colleagues in defense of free speech and freedom of religion when he signed a letter asking to reverse a new rule started by the Acting Architect of the Capitol that bans the use of religious expressions on flag certificates. Under the flag program, begun in 1937, individuals may request through House Members one of the many flags raised and lowered over the Capitol every day, which comes with a certificate that can be personalized. The Architect of the Capitol has been censoring the word "God" from these certificates. Congressman Miller is a strong supporter of the freedom to practice and express an individual's religious beliefs and is outraged that American citizens have been denied their religious freedoms. The Architect is the custodian of the Capitol, charged with impartially serving the American people.

House Delivers Mortgage Tax Relief

The House this week passed legislation that would make crucial changes to a housing provision of the federal tax code that has contributed to recent problems in the mortgage market. Specifically, this bill would lessen the tax burden on homeowners restructuring a mortgage or homeowners forced to sell their homes for less than their mortgages. Under current tax law, debt forgiven following mortgage foreclosure or renegotiation is considered income for tax purposes, resulting in tax liability for individuals and families. With this bill, home mortgage debt forgiven through foreclosure, sale, or restructuring would not count as taxable income. Additionally, the bill would extend the tax deduction for the cost of private mortgage insurance for certain low-income individuals. As we continue to experience instability in real estate and home loan markets, Congressman Miller believes these important changes will be a crucial aid to successful homeownership.

Pelosi Calls Border Fence a "Terrible Idea"

Last week, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi called a plan to build fencing along parts of the Mexico border a "terrible idea." In 2006, Republicans passed the Secure Fence Act which requires the Department of Homeland Security to construct over 700 miles of double-layered reinforced fencing on our Southern border and install additional physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors. While some have suggested that the border security fence will never be built, Congress has mandated that the Department of Homeland Security construct a fence and provided the funding necessary to start construction as soon as possible. Congressman Miller will continue to fight every effort by Democrats to strip funding from and stop construction of the border fence.

Congress Requires Pentagon to Report on Plans for Iraq

On Tuesday, the House approved legislation requiring the Department of Defense to report periodically on the status of plans to reduce troop levels in Iraq. The bill, which does not contain a timeline for withdrawal, simply requires the Secretary of Defense to update Congress every ninety days on the status of contingency plans for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Contingency planning is already one of the core responsibilities of our nation's military. Reporting would continue until the Secretary certifies that the United States Armed Forces are no longer primarily engaged in a combat mission. Congressman Miller voted for the bill and he strongly supports efforts by the Pentagon to continue planning for the responsible removal of our troops as soon as their mission in Iraq is complete.

Brea Couple Honored as Angels in Adoption

Congressman Miller is honored to nominate Ron and Ruth DeVries as his 2007 Angels in Adoption. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute each year administers the Angels in Adoption program which allows Members of Congress to honor the good work of one family in their district that has enriched the lives of foster children or orphans. After raising four children of their own, the DeVries family has taken in 232 foster children over the last 45 years, four of which they have adopted. Congressman Miller commends Ron and Ruth DeVries for being real Angels in Adoption. To nominate an Angel for 2008, please contact his Brea office at (714) 257-1142.

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